

Disengaged Development: Neoliberal Strategies for a Stable Somalia

In a recent talk at Ohio State University, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud explained that Somalia was a young country, claiming that its history only reached back 40 years (Mohamud 2013a). He appealed to the sizable Somali audience, most of whom were members of the large diaspora living in Columbus, to return to Somalia and use the skills and experiences that they had gained in the United States to help shape and rebuild the country. Mohamud positioned them at the forefront of his new Somalia, assuring them that the country was starting to turn itself around; that there were institutions to support them in their business ventures. There was little discussion of state help for the starving and horrendously poor Somalis that still reside in the country and continue to live in a nation that is marked by ongoing violence. Instead, he asked them to bring their neoliberal values and their savings earned abroad back to the country. Mohamud's speech is a clear example of roll out neoliberalism in which the private sector "become[s] responsible for tasks formerly considered to be the responsibility of the state" (Nuijten et al. 2012). From these remarks, it is evident that the Somali government has bought into the neoliberal mentality that has been pushed onto it by Western governments as the strategy for redevelopment. The Somali government, using discourses of individual responsibility and entrepreneurialism, have attempted to spur on the Somali people, both those who remain in the country as well as those in the diaspora, to rebuild the economy for it.

The neoliberal project as a prevailing governmentality has become more plausible as globalization allows for the easy transfer of ideas. This mentality frames social and

political strategies in economic terms, using “various techniques... to get individuals, populations, institutions, and spaces to act entrepreneurial” (Spence 2012). Neoliberal thought has dominated strategies for the development of economically underperforming cities and countries in recent history. The neoliberal mentality, with its promotion of self-responsibility and competition, has been pushed by economically and politically stable countries, which pay little attention to historical context and institutional performance, upon unprepared developing nations. What allows this mentality to be easily transferable is its use of the idea of the expert. Politically and economically dominant countries have developed an ‘expertise’ about economic matters of which emerging nations are assumed to have no previous knowledge. Expertise comes along with discourses of “truth” and “reason,” using rational choice “to get people to recognize and act on their (narrow) self-interest... problems and their solutions are taken out of the realm of politics traditionally considered because they are viewed as being ‘truthful’ and objective’...” (Spence 2012) However, these ‘experts’ fail to recognize and take into consideration the multiple contingencies at work in these countries, muddling the transfer of ideas and forcing a square peg of distinctly western neoliberal ideals and development strategies into the round hole of the lived experiential contextuality. Developing nations embrace these strategies, which appear to work so well in other contexts, and attempt to apply them to the distinct situations in their countries. In many circumstances, the failure to adapt to this approach of development to the unique environments present has prevented these countries from making progress. Discourses of becoming a “world class city” in India (Ghertner 2012; Ellis 2012), policies for economic recovery through housing in Brazil (Nuijten et al. 2012), and the urbanization of China (He and Wu 2009)

have allowed these governments and policy makers to blind those involved to the realities of the environment that is intended to be changed. For example, in the case of India, urban elites are permitted to appropriate means of knowledge production (forums, meetings, etc.) and create “elite imaginaries,” or generalized constructs, of a “world class city” that overlook the needs of the urban poor (Ellis 2012). In a similar case, Chinese housing officials have been able to use the apparent logic of housing redevelopment as a means of encouraging economic growth in order to mask the effects of these policies, namely displacement of low-income residents (He and Wu 2009). Again, the economic interests of the elites take precedence over the lives of the poor.

This paper will show how the mentality of ‘roll-out’ neoliberalism has been pushed on different populations of Somalis permeating multiple scales within the country and abroad despite the government’s failure to recognize diverse experiences and identities. It will show that neoliberal discourses of individual responsibility and competition continue to overshadow and divert accountability of the government for the poor living conditions in the country. First, this paper will give a background to the Somali conflict and explain the roots of many of the social and political problems that endure to this day. As the Somali government attempts to create universality of identity, this section will seek to present the necessarily non-Euclidean conceptions of Somalis’ subjectivities. This subjectivity, or sense of place, is “constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus,” instead of a “long, internalized history” (Massey 1993). I will explain how different points in history have allowed for multiple articulations of subjectivity and how this stands to complicate the country’s progress with current neoliberal strategies. Next, the paper will show the ways

the country has encouraged and reaped the benefits of the diaspora, in the form of the diaspora, as an ideal neoliberal subject. It will show how these discourses of economic redevelopment as social progress have helped to justify the use of the Somali diaspora as the primary agent of development as it prop up the poor and disadvantaged, helping the state to disengage from the task of long term change through policy decisions. The transformation of welfare from a government supplied entity to one largely subsidized by the private sector has propelled the Somali government to attempt to create investment opportunities designed to bring back Somalis from abroad to return with them their money and entrepreneurial spirit. Despite the fact that these structures do not exist, money continues to flow into the country from in the form of aid from foreign governments becoming lost in the morass of corrupt governmental bureaucracy. Within Somalia, the story is completely different. The final section will show how government attempts to harness the rewards of development through the encouragement of self-responsibility and citizen involvement within Somalia have largely failed in spite of this. This is not to say, however, that the neoliberal mentality is not present in Somalia. Terrorist organizations and informal economies have been able to capitalize on these subjects by providing them with both the economic and political agency that the government, preoccupied with pulling in foreign dollars, will not provide to them. This turn to violence ends up reproducing inequalities and poor living conditions the country has said it is trying to remedy.

Colonial Legacies and Divergent Senses of Place

Pre-colonial Somali political structure was a highly federalized system as it followed their clan based societal organization. The clan-based system meant a spatially diffuse and varied country. Massey's idea of 'power-geometry' (1993: 61) is particularly helpful in understanding the ongoing struggles between the diverse factions within Somalia and becomes further complicated when examining the diaspora. 'Power-geometry' holds that different groups and individuals experience very specific realities based on the way in which they are positioned relative to certain power relations. This is to say, depending on the space which the group or individual occupies, they may be able to use this power or become tied up and confined by it. This leads to a very complex understanding of the space in which a group or individual inhabits, or a sense of place. A person's sense of place can most often times not be defined by political boundaries defined by people who filter the location of these borders through their own unique sense of place. Instead, place should be understood through a person's multiple identities that exist both within and beyond these borders.

“The uniqueness of a place, or a locality, in other words is constructed out of particular interactions and mutual articulations of social relations, social processes, experiences and understandings, in a situation of co-presence, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are actually constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself, whether that be a street, a region or even a continent” (Massey 1993: 66).

In this section, I will explain how the stretching of identities in Somalia as a result of colonization and its legacies has led to a misunderstanding, whether accidental or purposeful, of the multiplicities of Somali society by those in power. This has ended up

creating a distinctly whitewashed picture of the country that allows the extent of the situation in Somalia to be overlooked. First, I will give a background of pre-colonial social structure and its traditional understandings of place. Secondly, I will show how identity in post-colonial Somalia has been harnessed numerous times by those in power in order to maintain control. This will lay the ground work for understanding how neoliberal strategies for development continue to perpetuate Euclidean ideas of space.

Traditional Somali social relations consisted of people connected through various levels of kinship and classifications that exist today and continue to hold power in times of central government instability. There are five levels: clan-group, clan, sub-clan, primary lineage, and dia-paying group (Lewis 1982: 4). Each of these segments has different functions and successively decreasing number of members. The clan-family is the broadest and highest level of the clan structure. There are four main nomadic clan families: the Darood historically centered in the middle of the country, the Isaaq in the north, the Hawiye in the east and far south, and the Dir in the far north. The two historically agricultural clan families, the Digil and the Rahanweyn, are historically based in the south along the coast (Lewis 1982: 9). These families can consist of more than a million members and for that reason are not very politically coherent. However, clan-family ties are very strong among individuals and can produce otherwise non-existent tensions among people of differing clans. Usually, these clan ties are measured back approximately 30 generations to a common ancestor (Lewis 1982:4). The clan is a smaller grouping of people, tracing a common ancestor back to around 20 generations. This group creates a cohesive political unit (Lewis 1985: 4). As distinct from the geographically diffuse clan-family, the clan had a more regular consistent pattern of

grazing land and “some degree of localization” (Lewis 1985: 4). Though agricultural patterns have changed, geographical localization still exists. In some instances the clan may have been led by a ‘Sultan,’ however, this did not mean any form of central governing body existed. In large clan-families, clans may need to be broken down further into sub-clans which function much like clans even to the point of having their own ‘Sultans’ (Lewis 1985: 5). It is within the primary lineage groups that most social interaction exists. The primary lineage groups have strong kin ties as they can usually trace their common ancestor back through six to eight generations. Because of this strong connection, most marriage exists outside of the primary lineage as they do not feel the need to strengthen ties through ceremony (Lewis 1985: 6). The smallest grouping in the Somali clan system is the dia-paying group. This community can contain from a few hundred to a few thousand people each able to trace a common ancestor back around four to eight generations. It is through the connection or affiliation to the dia-paying group that most political action is taken, as the members “are pledged to support each other in collective political and jural responsibility...” (Lewis 1985: 6)

From the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, Somalia was subject to various regimes of European colonial rule, with control fluctuating between Portugal, Italy, France, and the United Kingdom. These colonial powers formed “illegitimate boundaries” and imposed colonial histories, political structures, and languages that began to create new, previously nonexistent cleavages within the country as well as solidify and institutionalize those already existing (Besteman 1999: 12). For example, historically Somali farm and grazing lands were placed within Djibouti, Kenyan, and Ethiopian borders as well as separated between Italian and British Somalia creating tension over

land-use rights. This practice is unremarkable as it was repeated time and time again by colonial powers throughout the region and the globe. However, it served to create very definite geographical axis of difference legitimizing rifts in forms that had not presented themselves previously to the Somalis. In the summer of 1960 both the British and what had been the Italian territories in Somalia gained their independence and the first Somali Republic was established. This republic saw a democracy with multiparty elections that lasted nine years (Adam 2008: 1). However, clans increasingly vied for dominance of the country and the government was ripped apart by corruption and infighting. In October 1969, Siyaad Barre successfully conducted a military coup, gaining control of the entire country.

Barre's rise to power was characterized by an alignment with the Soviet Union which began to fund his increasingly powerful army. The Soviet support came as a result of Barre's adherence to "scientific socialism" (Adam 2008: 9). This socialism promoted a reliance on education, training, technical competence, specialization, and experience in order to politicize institutions that were performing well (Adam 2008: 10). These criteria for power were used throughout his government, resulting in a relatively stable and well-functioning country. However, socialism was short lived in Somalia and quickly Barre began to shift his focus from objective qualifications for power to clan specific appointments. This clan-based favoritism used trustworthy men selected by the ruler to be placed in positions of power and control, favoring his own, his mother's, as well as his son-in-law's sub clans (Adam 2008: 10). Rich or powerful members of other clan groups began to feel the negative effects of Barre's rule soon after his switch to clan-based favoritism. He began to arrest and exile any opposing clans in the Somali ruling class.

Shifting in backing from the USSR to the U.S., Italy, and China, Barre began to incite wars between other threatening clans, arming some against others and creating conflict that was not truly present. This especially insidious practice by Barre showed his understanding of discontinuous senses of place within the country among the different clans, and how to create discord from them. Eventually, the United States began to question the Somali government's human rights record and withdrew both economic and military aid by 1989 and in the beginning of 1991, the Barre regime came to an end (Adam 2008: 15).

In the years that followed Siyaad Barre's fall from power, there was general lawlessness resulting from an attempted power grab by many different clan leaders and warlords trying to fill the vacuum left. The factional fighting eventually became a civil war that reportedly cost the lives of 300,000 people in 1992 (Shay 2008: 10). Operation Restore Hope, started by the UN with the help of the United States, set out to provide nutritional aid to the thousands of people starving due to the war, to disarm fighting factions, and to formulate a Western-style central government (Shay 2008: 10). Despite its lofty goals, the UN quickly found itself in a much more precarious situation as they had unpredicted heavy losses in battles against local militias. Additionally, these militias began to see control of food distribution as a huge point of leverage in new efforts to gain control of the country. For that reason, many of the different factions took it upon themselves to gain power over UN relief dispersal and use it as they saw fit. This exacerbated the humanitarian crisis present in Somalia even further (Shay 2008: 11).

After the fall of the Barre regime in 1991, informal Islamic courts were created to maintain order in the country. The success of these courts is attributed to their reputation

for discipline and their ability to maintain order (Shay 2008: 99). These informal groups eventually evolved into a more centralized pseudo-government called the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). This government was characterized by highly repressive governance and the imposition of radical Islamic law. In the wake of 9/11, the U.S. began to see the rise of Islamic rule in Somalia as a possible breeding ground for terrorist activity. They decided to take action and supported the Ethiopian dismantling of the ICU in 2006. Ethiopian military rule of Somalia's capital was characterized as brutal and was thought to lead to the further crumbling of Somali society and many residents saw the U.S.'s participation in the overthrow of the ICU as a power grab based on fears of an increase in international terrorism stemming from the country (Ibrahim 2010). After Ethiopian troops took control of the south of Somalia, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), a government first founded in 2004 and ousted by the ICU in June of 2006, was placed back in control of the country (Shay 2008: 121). The TFG was characterized by a Western style centralized democracy, which many Somalis were wary of because of their experience of corruption and marginalization under this form of government (International Crisis Group 2011). Despite this, on Monday August 20, 2012, a selection committee made up of clan elders selected 250 individuals for the 275 member parliament and in early September of that year, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was elected president (Al-Jazeera 2012a, Al-Jazeera 2012b). In the summer of 2012, a provisional constitution was drafted, however, it is still awaiting approval by parliament (Al-Jazeera 2012c).

Against this background of domestic instability, the ever-increasing globalization of capital has fragmented the Somali population as those able to leave the country in

search of better livelihoods for themselves partly so as to be able to help those who remain in the country through remitting. The neoliberal mentality continues to be employed by Somali leaders targeting all of these split identities through discourses of unity in order to treat the population as a cohesive group all with the same intentions of Somali national economic growth. An inability to capture domestic Somalis within this mentality due to a lack of institutional stability and an absence of perceived agency, or ability to create change, will be discussed later in this paper. Despite the scattering of identity as discussed above, the diaspora as a community has been an enormous source of income and assistance for many who remain in the country as they take on the role of private sector welfare provider. What appears to be the case for this population is that they have been actively enrolled in the neoliberal project, which will be the argument of the next section.

Diasporic Consequences

In his Columbus speech, President Mohamud urged the members of the Somali community to come back to Somalia to set up businesses as well as help to rebuild the country (Mohamud 2013a). Somalia has been framed as a place open to the competitive processes that neoliberal thought lionizes. President Mohamud has not only set Somalia forward as a place of investment for non-Somali investors, but has also pushed the idea of the diaspora as a group of investors to be won over to his neoliberal crusade. Pushing entrepreneurial discourse, he told the diaspora to start businesses in Somalia because the time was ripe and the economic environment ideal. These people would be cash cows for

the Somali government, even more than remittances allow them to be, if they were to bring their money and entrepreneurial skills back to Somalia.

These ideas of reliance on the private sector and individual responsibility are very characteristic of what has been called roll out neoliberalism. The downward rescaling of the state's economic regulatory involvement has been a recent occurrence over the past 30 years. During the 1980's, a dismantling or 'roll-back' of Fordist-Keyensian policies of capital accumulation led to a state withdrawal from its typically welfarist regime (Coq-Huelva 2013). A decade later, in place of these policies, the state began to encourage, or 'roll-out,' policies onto the private sector, changing the structure of the system entirely. Responsibility for socio-economic issues such as welfare, crime, unemployment, and homelessness was then placed on the individual, and continues to be today. However, this is not to say that the state has no role in controlling these issues. The emphasis has switched from direct state involvement in correcting these problems to one of state regulation of private responses (Peck and Tickell 2002). An idea concurrent with Foucault's idea of governance from afar and governing of the self, the roll-out neoliberal mentality is best placed into the minds of the subject through discourses of self responsibility.

The shifting of social responsibility from the state to the people, a distinctively neoliberal idea, has played out in many different ways in different contexts (eg: Fairbanks 2011; Rankin and Delany 2011; DeFillipis et al. 2006), Somalia being one such context. Mohamud has placed the responsibility for the recovery of the country on the people who no longer live there by appealing to two, not necessarily congruous aspects of Somali identity, family and country. He has talked of families left behind in Somalia who would

need help to make the country move forward as well as speaking to the country's condition as a whole. His talk implied that if the people who had gained skills, not to mention apparent reserves of cash, and experience living in the United States would not help their families and fellow Somalis, then no one would. He disassociated the role of the government from the welfare of its people by explaining that they were doing what they could by creating and maintaining the structures and security necessary to rebuild a Somali economy and boost the well-being of the Somali people. These 'roll-out' policies have allowed the government to divest itself of the responsibility from being the primary agent of social change.

In an opinion piece posted on Al-Jazeera, former Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon (2013) wrote that Somalia had "turned a corner and there is no going back." He explained that Somalia was seeing a return to normalcy as exemplified by extension of government into outer regions, economic recovery, and the return of social organizations such as a new sports club. In a similar article, Somali President Mohamud(2013b) talked about the great progress that has been made in the judicial and economic sectors, as well as the security of the nation. He acknowledged the gains that still must be made, however, he assured readers that new political structures taking root and the promotion of democratic values in the country have and will continue to help the country rise above, what he called, merely being dealt a bad hand. In these statements, as well as the President's address at Ohio State University, the two Somali leaders appear to be optimistic as they explain the progress that the country has already made, despite empirical evidence to the contrary. Extensive poverty, inequality, and lack of representation are characteristic of contemporary Somalia (UNDP 2012). We must ask

the question, what is the function of these public statements in light of all of the negative press? These statements play a role in persuading members of the Somali diaspora to bring their money and skills back to Somalia. Somalis are being asked to re-examine the environment in the country as a place of investment for the individual entrepreneur. Accepting unquestioningly that these Somalis want to return to the country, little to nothing has been said about the diaspora's distinct history in and away from Somalia. This may lead the government to make untrue assumptions about the lives and intentions of this group, on whom they greatly depend for sustaining the country. Additionally, Somali leaders have not constructed the country as a place to live but instead to spend, thereby reconstructing Somalia in a distinctly neoliberal manner. I will frame the diaspora as seemingly buying into the neoliberal mentality through two competing subjectivities; that of external investor and that uniquely situated in between Somali and American transnational. It is crucial to understand this issue as being at different scales, first at the macro and then micro, in order to show how each is both seemingly counter to yet at the same time constitutive of the other.

In his Al-Jazeera article, former Prime Minister Shirdon is, without a doubt, attempting to engage with would-be Somali 'investors'. He explains the institutions that supposedly exist, as well as those being built that promise the security for investors. Shirdon talks of Somalia having a "bright future" being "within touching distance" and the President "assures partners...that we are on the right path" (Mohamud 2013b; Shirdon 2013). The way in which Mohamud talks of partners sounds very similar to the way a CEO would reassure her shareholders. Like a new business in need of capital,

Somalia is presenting itself as a land of opportunity and possibility with a multitude of avenues for monetary gain.

The government has created an interesting dynamic whereby the country is attempting to rebrand itself in order to attract investment. As transnational capital plays such an important role in the development of the country, it is becoming more and more important for the government to keep these flows open by redrawing the country's image and providing the diasporic market a new Somali 'brand'. Branding is a combination of both an attempt to homogenize and standardize in order to compete with existing entities in the marketplace as well as a "process of differentiation and diversification" intended "to attract...investment to a particular local" (Gotham 2007). Both of these components are visible in the redevelopment efforts in Somalia. They have tried to create a distinctly Somali country, homogenizing the various subjectivities at the national level and at the same time setting it apart from other countries at the global level. By portraying the diaspora as a single group, the government has tried to target them by setting their home country apart from the countries that they have settled in. This naturally creates conflict as these competing "urban imaginaries are not uniform or coherent but are plural, ... contested, and power-laden (Gotham 2007). In order to achieve the intended effects, the country may rely "on evocative storytelling to manage and control the interpretations people have about a city, and to socialize visitors and residents to view the city in a particular way" (Gotham 2007). Through discourses similar to those from the President and former Prime Minister, the Somali government is trying to tell a very selective narrative about the progress and condition of Somalia and its economy. There is much "adapting, reshaping, and manipulating... images of the place" to the ends that the

picture of reality is warped in hopes that this new picture of Somalia may be desirable for the transnational investor (Gotham 2007). What may be emerging is a shift away from a focus on remittances as a primary means of capital flow into the country toward human capital as a more sustainable form of development.

What has occurred is a commodification of the Somali way of life, which has become necessarily problematic in that it targets the diaspora to consume the Somali lifestyle, something very different from the terrible conditions that actually exist. The government has framed Somalia and its most basic characteristics as some sort of spectacle, whereby the diaspora is treated like a group of tourists asked to come to the country and buy into the essentialized culture. The discourses that promote Somalia have allowed the government to further impose from above hegemonic ideas and false images of the country, further disguising it with discourses of political and economic strength (Gotham 2005). However, it is hard to believe that the diaspora is so far removed from the terrible living conditions that it would trust this “commodification, homogenization and rationalization” of the country as a place of consumption (Gotham 2005). This seeming contradiction leads to another possible avenue for research, looking at the effects of these discourses of a stable, secure, and developing Somalia have had on the return of members of the diaspora.

Mohamud’s speech at Ohio State further positioned the country as a mere 40 years old and has created a common, yet undoubtedly sanitized, history for the people in the country and for would be investors. Somali leaders want the diaspora to buy into the idea that they have a stake in seeing all people in Somalia better off, no matter how different they are from them. While it is almost certain that many, if not most, Somalis

have a desire to see the country stabilize, highly nationalistic discourses function in a very specific way. This discursive homogenizing of identities is a distinctly neoliberal practice in the way it tries to reproduce a more easily governed uniformity through talk of national identity and Somali unity. The essentializing of identities helps to form seemingly unvarying and constant populations, despite such simple categories being a myth, to be targeted by investors; in the Somali case, the diaspora.

This group of Somali transnationals falls victim to more essentialization as the government fails to acknowledge the varied subjectivities of this population. I will argue that the government's attempt to target the diaspora as a singular community may ultimately be in vain because of its refusal to realize and take into consideration the multiple subjectivities that exist. The Somali community abroad necessarily has a diverse and uneven identity separate from both that of domestic Somalis as well as those diverse experiences within the diaspora itself.

An explanation of conceptions of community (DeFillipis et al. 2006) is particularly helpful in understanding the Somali government's attitude towards the diaspora. DeFillipis et al. talk of a group they call the 'new communitarians' who ostensibly try to counter the effects of neoliberal policies that foster hyper-individualism. However, as DeFillipis et al. go on to explain, the 'new communitarians' fail to seriously engage with changing the neoliberal hegemony, instead turning the community as a whole into the primary target of neoliberal strategies. This conception of community does not pay attention "to macro structural factors of macro power relations that control the flow of resources to or away from [the] poor" (DeFillipis et al. 2006). More important to this discussion, these "community romantics" do not recognize that "structural divisions,

[blur] political sides and interests, and [eliminate] dissenting voices” as they focus on an idealistic and vision of what *could* be or what *should* be rather than the attempting to change the existing reality (DeFillipis et al. 2006). This normative vision positions particular issues and values as those important to all members of this fabricated community. It places all agency in collectivity and responsibility within the group using community as a form of ‘social capital’ to change societal inequalities. In the case of the Somali diaspora, these assumptions are most likely misled in that they place economic responsibility onto a category that may not exist in the first place.

Nina Glick Schiller gives multiple examples of these fabricated and totalizing identities. One such example is that of a multicultural Manchester, New Hampshire, in which the city, with the intention of pulling itself out of an economic decline, tried to rebrand itself as multicultural. Officials created a new history of the city as one that was newly diverse with a wave of new migrants entering the city. While immigrants had always played an integral part in Manchester, the city was home to a influx of immigrants in the late nineties. Capitalizing on this new wave, Manchester hosted ethnic celebrations, which categorized citizens by their nationality. The citizens targeted by this forced inclusion, however, did not align themselves with groups defined by nationality and ethnicity, among which conflict often arose, but instead by religious beliefs. The residents understood the city’s commodification of ethnicity and rejected it as a primary feature of their subjectivity (Glick Schiller 2011).

The Somali government must be careful about grouping the diaspora together as a single unit that can be targeted with its neoliberal discourses. It risks achieving their developmental goals by misrepresenting members of the diaspora and further reproducing

stereotypes. Somalis abroad, like their domestic counterparts, have more than just their Somali identity. Beyond their national and possible clan affiliations, they encounter a transnational identity of the country in which they reside. This cooptation of ethnicity as a rallying point for economic development, as exemplified by the Somali diaspora and in the city of Manchester above, demands more attention as a strategy for development. Focusing on a single facet of identity as a means to promote the relocation of members of the diaspora runs many risks. This strategy has not failed from a purely economic standpoint, however, From the rejection of certain populations to adhere to the categories into which they have been placed to the failure of the government to respond to the changing identity of the Somali population, Somali leaders must be build an awareness of difference that up until now they have lacked. The consequences of maintaining this discursively essentialistic viewpoint on the diaspora are the risks of creating false realities about the lives of the diaspora, as well as domestically explained later in this paper, and producing internal social divisions.

The effectiveness of these tactics cannot be overlooked as there is no denying the contribution of remittances to the Somali economy. It is estimated that the diaspora sends around \$2.3 billion back to Somalia every year, or approximately 35% of the Somali GDP. Additionally, these remittances make up around 80% of the startup capital for Somali businesses (UNDP 2012: 25). Of course, these estimates are not without limitations. They leave out funds not transmitted through an agency, as well as fail to take into account the fact that because data collection concerns possibly sensitive financial information, some people are unwilling to provide entirely accurate figures, if they are willing to offer this information up at all (Lindley 2010). In light of these

possible underestimates, it is quite possible that the total remittances have exceeded the amount of foreign assistance to the country (Lindley 2010).

These remittances do not come without a price to the remitters. Many of the remitters continue to be stuck in poverty, continually sending money back to Somalia. Many Somalis in the diaspora work low paying jobs already, working long hours for poor wages, making sacrifices of their own in order to save their last pennies for their families. Some even pawn their valuables and take out bank loans in order to make ends meet and still remit (Lindley 2010). These families abroad continue to send money for a multitude of reasons, from maintaining familial ties to paying off debts. However, these relationships based on monetary support can and do create tensions among remitters and recipients. Remitters feel underappreciated and taken advantage of, feeling as though the money that they provide is taken for granted. Idil, a Somali living in the UK, explained the extent to which people will go to beg for more support, “I have an aunt who had all the diseases in the whole wide world!... People say anything to get money. (quoted in Lindley 2010: 135)” Remitters also have stress about their ability to meet their own living expenses and struggle with adapting to life in a new country causing tension within families abroad (Lindley 2010). Despite these hardships, the lack of support from the government for domestic Somalis reinforces the idea that the diaspora is the last hope for the stability of the country.

The government understands the power that this money has in helping the Somali economy to stay afloat and continues to target the diaspora as a large group of financiers for a new Somalia (Mohamud 2013b). Additionally, the diaspora continues to supply many of the leaders of the country, many members returning to encourage these

neoliberal tactics from above. At the expense of the diaspora and their livelihoods, the government places the burden of development on Somalis abroad and has seen the positive results. It may appear as though this is the only likely scenario given the seemingly limited resources of the government, however, foreign aid dollars per capita was US \$100.60 in 2008 and over the past five years, the World Bank has approved \$20 million in development money (UNDP 2012: 34; World Bank 2014). These same strategies in which the government shifts responsibility have been used by the government on domestic Somalis, however, as the next section will explain, these strategies have been ineffective for a number of reasons.

Domestic Irony

Despite its best efforts, the Somali government has not been able to use the same discourses ostensibly successfully employed on the diaspora to bring domestic Somalis around to their point of view. However, I will not argue that the neoliberal mentality itself has not been effective in transforming the political landscape of Somalia. In fact, quite the opposite, the neoliberal project is alive and well and has merely articulated itself in another fashion. This section will show how the neoliberal mentality has touched down in Somalia through informal markets. Because of Somali awareness of an absence of political and economic agency as a result of a lack of stable governmental institutions, many Somalis have turned to piracy and radical Islamism as a means of supporting themselves and their families financially. The rest of this section will be organized thus. First, I will give an account of the inconsistencies between the discourses of stability and security that the government has given to the Somali people as a means of encouraging

economic involvement. Next, I will discuss the means by which informal governance structures gain and maintain power over populations in more broad contexts before explaining the nuances of the Somali example. Finally, I will show how a lack of political and economic opportunity in the country has created an environment that has become conducive to systems of political and economic informality.

Despite Somali leaders touting of an ever-improving political situation at home, the experiences of the people living in the country differs drastically. Both Somalis and international groups alike continue to question the effectiveness and quality of current political processes and institutions. The legitimacy of presidential election results has been challenged by multiple accusations of bribery from inside and outside the parliament. Reports have made that bribes of up to \$50,000 were being given to those voting to ensure that President Mohamud, described initially as a dark horse in the election, won the race (Al-Jazeera 2012a). Senior diplomats, members of parliament, and “people connected to the technical selection committee... [have said] that there is bribery going on all sides and some of those MPs have accepted that money” (Al-Jazeera 2012a). Other reports of vote rigging have surfaced in the recent presidential election, however, these must be greeted cautiously as they were made by presidential candidate Ahmed Ismail Samatar after of his loss (Farah 2013). These claims have done nothing to help the already tenuous approval of government stability and transparency. In its 2012 report on perceptions of government transparency, Transparency International places Somalia last, tied with North Korea and Afghanistan, scoring 8 points on a scale out of 100 (Transparency International 2014). Additionally, a UN Development Program report on the status of Somali youth, defined as those between the ages 14-29, found their

perceptions of government to be equally dismal. Regardless of the fact that Somalis younger than 30 make up 70% of the total population, over 65% said that they either did not care to be involved in politics, wanted to be a little less involved, or wanted to be much less involved (UNDP 2012: 69). The report asked respondents the reasons for their answers and many explained their distrust in the government and lack of confidence in its ability to bring about change (UNDP 2012: 68). Concerns over the inability of the government to prevent crime and its unwillingness to charge those responsible have also become an issue. In a recent, case a woman, with a journalist interviewing her was arrested after accusing a man of rape along for “defamation of state” (Mohamed 2013).

A gap between talk of economic recovery and rates of poverty and unemployment continues to warrant skepticism. According to the UNDP, 78% of Somalis live below the poverty line with a majority of them living in the agricultural areas of the country, and these are the people who are most often without political representation (UNDP 2012: 25). A large food crisis stemming from the political turmoil of the early 1990’s continues to be a problem. The food shortage crisis was declared over in 2011, however, in another discursive contradiction, a third of the population remains unable to meet their nutritional needs (UNDP 2012: 34). A majority of international aid has focused on meeting short-term goals, seeming to overlook systemic issues in the interest of building more capital for the corrupt government to deal out as it sees fit. Unemployment also remains a huge problem in Somalia. From 2002 to 2012, unemployment for Somalis aged 14 to 64 rose from 47% to 53%, signaling an economy worse than the one portrayed by the president and prime minister. In the most populous age bracket, 14-29, unemployment is even higher, estimated at 67% (UNDP 2012: 61). Of those who are employed, more are self-

employed than are a paid employee (UNDP 2012: 64). Most South-Central Somalis in the youth age bracket believe that the problem exists because of a disparity between the educational demands of many jobs and the educational opportunities that exist in the country (UNDP 2012: 65).

In February of 2013, former Prime Minister Shirdon embarked on a months long 'Listening Tour' to hear the voices of the Somali people. On this tour and in his writings, he praised the Somalis he met with for their resilience; however, he continually refuses to admit the extent to which the country is still floundering. This tour functioned as a way for the Somali people to buy into the neoliberal system of governance through the promotion of individual action. The former Prime Minister said, "I have listened to them carefully and heard their concerns...I have seen people ready to restore their dignity and unity and nationhood... The leadership belongs to the people. We only provide guidance" (Adan). The government placed the responsibility on the Somali people, attempting to elicit 'conversation' around what the people themselves wanted, however, the responses appear to have been largely discarded by the country's leaders.

This use of civic participation is very similar to one used in the gentrification of Recife, Brazil. The local government of Recife held meetings to involve the people in the redevelopment of the area, a strategy called participatory governance (Nuijten et al. 2012). This practice is understood as distinctly neoliberal in the way that it encourages and anticipates the contribution from the ordinary people, placing on them the responsibility to see that changes made are beneficial to the city as a whole. In a seemingly contradictory manner, this was also intended to be a means of de-collectivization by rewarding with preferential treatment these individuals who had the

loudest voices in meetings. By pushing for more citizen involvement yet rewarding individualization of responsibility, the city of Recife reproduced and reinforced the neoliberal mentality (Nuijten et al. 2012). In reality however, the people of Recife had no real input into redevelopment plans and these meetings served to pacify them and give them a false sense of involvement and purpose. The people were told through these meetings to “be cooperative and patient... not to protest or disturb the process” (Nuijten et al. 2012). Using a kind of divide-and-conquer strategy, the city planners of Recife calmed the audience and transformed individual concerns into collective desires that mirrored those goals of the city at large. After reminding the citizens of past failed attempts to redevelop, the planners appealed them as a group asking, “Is this what you want?” to which the people agreed that it was not. The planners then reshaped the individual interests into a collective ideal by asking “so we need to do this together, do we not?” (Nuijten et al. 2012). These same strategies are almost identical to the ex-Prime Minister’s ‘Listening Tour’. By encouraging a collective mentality of independence and responsibility, he further removes the government from the equation of change. He pushes the idea that the government has done everything they can and now needs the help of the Somali people to really make a difference.

An idea that is particularly helpful in understanding the way that informal governance begins to take a role in society through a dominant mentality is that of civic governmentality. In the absence of the governance of the state, people continue to be disciplined and governed through the practices of civic groups. “...There is a ‘civilizing’ of political society, such that grassroots governmentality comes to turn on formations of civic identity and a broader civic commitment... Within regimes of civic

governmentality, the urban subject is simultaneously empowered and self-disciplined, civil and mobilized...” (Roy 2009) Civic governmentality is unquestionably neoliberal, valuing responsibility and self-governing, many times taking place as a result of the detachment of the state. Informality is often ‘othered,’ positioned outside the boundaries of rational and metered economic and political boundaries. However, these boundaries of legitimacy are often set arbitrarily by the governing intent on maintaining absolute power over the governed. They take the ‘legitimate’ political and economic activities and use them to create a spatial imaginary, or a “rhetorical substitute,” for the existing variability of Somali power relations (Gregory 2010). However, the imagined components of the state only reify these activities’ “legitimacy, ... naturalize their authority, and ... represent themselves as superior to, and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). In other words, by creating a legitimate-illegitimate binary, the state continues to reify the neoliberal governmentality, pushing the ruled to govern themselves. Despite this apparent divide, informal structures, both economic and political, often function in the same manner as the formal, affecting change through promoting strategies of governing the self by means of the neoliberal mentality.

There are many examples of this kind of formally structured governance by informal means, Hezbollah in Beirut and criminal dons in Jamaica are especially apposite instances. Hezbollah has proven itself to be “as much an apparatus of development as it is an apparatus of war,” providing crucial services such as housing construction, health services, and offering loans among others (Roy 2009). It has positioned itself as a mode of resistance to a government from which it feels disconnected and unrepresented. Beyond its place as a mediator and service provider, Hezbollah has used its power to

recreate space, “utliz[ing], creat[ing], and deploy[ing] market mechanisms to achieve urban development” (Roy 2009). Hezbollah has coopted market ideals and the neoliberal mentality in order to reformulate the lived environment of Shiites in Lebanon, thereby creating a space that “is not a counterpoint to Lebanese neoliberalism but rather a partner in it, facilitated by the wealth of the Shiite diaspora...” (Roy 2009) Another example is one of informal security in Jamaica. Despite the crime and violence that the Jamaican dons perpetrate, they have taken the place of the state as it has retreated from the providing social and security services to the lower classes (Jaffe 2012). Due to the withdrawal of the state, class separation has moved from abstraction to the concrete, with middle and upper classes literally fortifying themselves behind barbed wire and concrete walls. These boundaries help solidify the discourse of poverty, equating it with criminal activity. Neoliberalism works here to further marginalize those working within informal markets economically through state retraction and socially ostracize them through discourses of inherent criminality. This is where the dons of the Jamaican slums gain their influence and power. They fill the security vacuum providing services to the poor through informal power relations. The dons derive their financial and political power from legitimate political parties in Jamaica, “act[ing] as brokers between the urban poor and politicians,” in much the same way as Hezbollah in the example above (Jaffe 2012).

With the Somali government reaching outside the country to shepherd the diaspora back to Somalia, the neoliberal mentality seems to have also taken root inside the country. Despite the continued efforts of the Somali leaders, the discourses of the country’s progress have not been loud enough to convince the Somali people. The country continues to experience irritation with the lack of progress made in the country.

In a survey that asked respondents to rate on a scale 1 to 5, with 5 being the most frustrated, how frustrated they were about a multitude of factors from humiliation to unemployment to “poor governance and weak economic support systems,” results were clear that many Somalis are fed up with the current situation. The average score of frustration among the different aspects above ranged from 4.3 in South-Central Somalia to 3.7 in the northern autonomous regions (UNDP 2012:75). This section will examine the ways in which the retreat of the state has created a situation that has perpetuated abysmal living conditions for many Somalis, forcing them to look to informal means of securing livelihoods. Colonial legacies have left the country marred by absent or inadequate economic and political institutions and where those institutions exist, feelings of underrepresentation are prevalent among youth and women. Both legal and social barriers exist that prevent these groups from participating including clan affiliation, age, profession, and socio-economic status (UNDP 2012: 68). As the Somali state removes itself from a role of direct regulation, viable economic and political institutions are nonexistent due to lack of faith in ability to affect change. This feeling of inability to produce change in Somalia has led many Somalis to look beyond formal means to find this agency. Radical Islamist groups, the most prevalent being the terrorist organization Al-Shabaab, have been able to capitalize on this hopelessness, controlling much of the country despite continued efforts by the Somali government and other actors abroad to eliminate the group’s influence. Shirdon and Mohamud have made public statements that the country has provided Somalis with an environment in which that they can best become entrepreneurial citizens. However, this directly contrasts with the lived

experience and the reaction to political and economic instability has been a continually insecure country.

Perceptions of violence in South-Central Somalia were rated 2.1 out of 5, with 5 being the most peaceful, in the region as opposed to a 4.6 and 3.3 in autonomous, yet formally unrecognized, regions Somaliland and Puntland, respectively (UNDP 2012: 71). Somalis are still afraid of al-Shabaab, the ever-present terrorist organization (Al-Jazeera 2013a; Johnson 2013). They acknowledge the threat that the group poses and are aware of the control that it has over a large part of the country.

“‘The government of Somalia in one way or another is taking responsibility, but we very well know that the majority of the areas are in the hands of al-Shabab,’ Abdullahi Mohamed said. ‘For any person who wants to go back and to have security provided by the central government, that means they can only go back to where there is a central government. That is only in Mogadishu, the capital city’” (Swanson 2013).

Most recently, the group showed the threat it still poses as it attacked a Kenyan mall, killing and holding numerous Kenyans hostage (Reinl 2013).

When those involved in illicit activity were asked why they turned to a life of violence and crime, many speak of the benefits that groups such as al-Shabaab provide for them. Terrorist organizations, as well as pirate groups, can provide an outlet for Somalis who believe that they have no channels to voice their opinions through acts of violence. The most interesting aspect is the way that these informal governance systems end up reproducing the same structures as the formal governments that they seem to run against. “Contrary to characterizations...illicit activity often [takes] a systematic form, subject to... codes of conduct, internal hierarchies of power, and... expressions of

political resistance” (Foucault in Meehan 2012). These terrorist organizations end up becoming a surrogate for a stable government. This is portrayal of al-Shabaab is not without an understanding of the terrible and repressive strategies that the organization employs in order to maintain its power over the unwilling. Through an absolute, violent, and coercive use of Shari’a law, Shabaab intends to create an Islamic Somalia.

Additionally, I do not wish to make the argument that Shabaab acts as a benevolent pseudo-government changing the country with progressive policy. However, I would be remiss not to understand the affects of al-Shabaab’s dominating ideas and the ways in which they continue to hold power in Somalia. In an interview, a Somali ex-pirate revealed the rewards that illegitimate and illicit activities can provide. After he was unable to continue his already inadequate education, he was unable to find employment. He was lured into piracy by “frustration” as well as seeing his friends “leading luxurious lives with money from piracy,” able to earn sums of \$70,000 U.S. in just one raid (UNDP 2012: 41). In the absence of a functioning formal economy, these informal organizations provide for an outlet for this neoliberal mentality pushed by the Somali government to manifest itself.

Despite the best efforts of the Somali government to disseminate the neoliberal mentality domestically through the targeting of domestic Somalis with discourses of individual economic responsibility, the leaders have not seen the same response as that of the diaspora. In fact, this mentality has manifested itself through informal economies and governance, creating systems that attempt to counter the government and provide alternatives to its pathway to development.

Conclusion

The rebuilding of a central Somali state in the time of increased promotion of neoliberal approaches to development has created a contradictory political and economic environment within the country. Somalia has become a country truthfully unbounded by borders as a result of its colonial legacies and tumultuous independent past. It has attempted to “control its population across space,” increasing its efforts “to capture the remittances and/or incorporate [transnationals] into the networked affairs of the ‘home’ state” (Mitchell 2001). Strategies for the development of the country are directly contingent upon this population that is variable across space and time, however, the government seems to have failed to understand the unevenness of its people. The Somali government has attempted to legitimate an unloading of responsibility for service provision and economic development onto the private sector, characteristic of a neoliberal turn in policy, through the promotion of a logic of individuality by means of a neoliberal mentality. By using a Foucauldian analysis, it has become clearer as to how neoliberal strategies for development have become pervasive throughout the country on a multitude of scales. Through a top-down approach, promoting the logic of individual responsibility, the government has attempted to capture the economic development power of the Somali people as a whole under a universal umbrella of Somali identity. This has given mixed results. The continual shifting of the identities of Somali people means that the attempts to classify, so broadly, the diaspora and domestic Somalis as complete and rigid groups has had negative affects on both groups. While the diaspora appears to have

accepted this idea, sending large amounts of money back to the country every year, many continue to struggle to make ends meet in the countries in which they have settled. Despite this ongoing support from abroad, the livelihoods of a majority of domestic Somalis remain at dismal levels. Attempts to encourage Somalis who remain in the country to help with the rebuilding of the country have been unsuccessful, largely due to the lack of faith in the government's ability to create change combined with a lack of institutions to change the system itself. This has allowed informal governance, often, unfortunately, violent terrorist and pirate organizations, to fill the void left in many areas outside of major cities. This is where it is important to understand how the process of remitting and the reliance on informal economic actors and agencies has created a thrust of neoliberal values from the bottom-up. However, an extremely troubling consequence of the apparent acceptance of neoliberal development strategies as the best possibility has arisen. It seems as though as long as the corrupt leadership of Somalia reap the benefits of the cash flow of remittances and inability of the domestic Somalis to create political and economic change through formal institutions, they will refuse to acknowledge their unwillingness to produce long-term progress within their country through strong policy decisions.

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